

**Senator Larry E. Craig's Statement on the Introduction of Grizzly Bears  
into the Selway-Bitterroot area of Idaho and Montana**

Friday October 3, 1997

Boise State University, Student Union Building

I am glad to have the opportunity today to clearly state my position regarding the United States Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) plan to introduce the grizzly bear into the Selway-Bitterroot area of Idaho and Montana. I am pleased to see community involvement on such an important issues. However, I still have several significant concerns over the proposals to reintroduce the grizzly bear.

I have stated before and will continue to state that the plan to reintroduce grizzlies, which is opposed by our entire Congressional delegation, Governor Batt, the Idaho legislature as well as the Idaho Fish and Game, will put many Idahoans into life threatening situations while draining millions of taxpayer dollars from the Treasury. The Secretary of the Interior and his agencies are forcing the reintroduction of a dangerous predator into areas of our state that are designated for multiple use-- including both recreation and resource production.

When the release of the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) was announced, a meeting was arranged between the Idaho Congressional delegation and USFWS. At this meeting I challenged the legality of the citizen management alternative and requested the USFWS consult with the Interior Solicitor and the USDA Office of General Counsel on several issues surrounding the Citizens Management Committee before it releases the DEIS.

- 1 | Specifically, I requested that they look into the legality of a federal agency imposing its will on a state by introducing a dangerous predator into multiple-use public domain lands. I also asked to
- 2 | what extent the Secretary of the Interior can delegate his authority to a citizen's committee,
- 3 | whether the committee is subject to approval by the Secretary of the Interior or any other Administration official, and under what specific circumstances regarding the ESA a citizen's committee can operate. I have yet to receive a satisfactory response.

- 3 | Recently, Senator Burns and I inserted language concerning the grizzly bear introduction in the Interior Department's Appropriation bill in the Senate. This language provided funding for the USFWS to pay for a "population-based viability assessment" of grizzly bear. The population viability study should provide further evidence that reintroduction of grizzlies into Idaho will not determine the success or failure of grizzly populations in the lower 48 and, therefore, there is no reason to introduce them into Idaho. Furthermore, the bill prohibits any of the agencies from spending funds on introducing grizzly bears into the Bitterroots.

I do not support grizzly bear reintroduction into the state of Idaho, and I have directly challenged the Department of the Interior on its methods for reintroduction. The majority of Idaho's citizens do not support reintroduction of the grizzly, and I will fight to halt the Department of Interior's attempts to do so.